

SENATOR L. JOHNSON: The Chair recognizes Senator Barrett.

SENATOR BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. President and members. LB 298, as has been already discussed, is a bill to increase the legal rate for which newspapers are allowed to charge when they publish public notices and those public notices are required by law. And it would seem that every certain period of time, it's been averaging eight or nine years I believe, the newspapers have to come to this body and ask for an increase in those rates. In the bill you will notice on page 2 calls for a raise of from 32 cents per line to 37 cents per line on the first insertion and from 28 cents per line to 32 cents per line for any subsequent insertion and the statutes, of course, identify the number of publications necessary. The conversion tables are also found in the bill itself. It's a very straightforward bill, up or down. Do the newspapers of Nebraska get the increase, do they not? I believe that the fact sheet which has been passed out on your desks is most appropriate and probably answers most, if not all, of the questions that you might have on this issue. Specifically, I would call your attention to the fact that newspapers printing public notices have not had an increase in fees since 1982. The bill asks for a 15 percent increase. The costs of publishing over these eight years, seven years, have certainly increased more than that 15 percent. You can compare these increases in essential costs of publication since 1982 with the costs as you will see in your fact sheet, the cost of postage up 150 percent or more, newsprint up 32 percent, ink up 17 percent. That does not say anything about the film and the chemicals and the labor and the employee benefits, et cetera. I think the only question that has been asked of me that might not be answered on the fact sheet is, why can't publishers increase their subscription and their advertising or rates to take care of increased costs? Well, they have; they do; and they will continue to do it. But our problem here is that they can't raise the legal rate for legal notice publications without legislative approval and that is the sum and substance of the bill and that is the reason why the bill is before us today. With that, Mr. President, I would urge the body to advance LB 298. Thank you.

SENATOR L. JOHNSON: Thank you, Senator Barrett. Further discussion on the bill. Mr. Clerk, amendment on the desk.

CLERK: Mr. President, yes, sir, excuse me. Senator Haberman